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Beware The 'Supercommittee'

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Budget Policy: Congress' debt-ceiling deal kicked the can over to a special bipartisan "supercommittee" that will make big decisions on spending cuts and taxes. Will that panel be top-heavy with liberals?

There is a lot to fear from the establishment of an umpteenth blue-ribbon commission designed to solve another dilemma said to be beyond the reach of the ordinary legislative procedures of the U.S. government.

One such recent supercommittee of sorts, the 2006 Iraq Study Group, recommended another Vietnam-style surrender for the U.S.; then-President George W. Bush turned the tables with Gen. David Petraeus' successful Iraq surge initiative.

Tea Party activists are properly worried about Congress' new supercommittee duping the public into accepting tax hikes and phantom spending reform.

FreedomWorks Vice President Max Pappas, for instance, charged last week that "Speaker Boehner is using the committee as a facade for potential tax increases down the road without having to commit to anything on paper right now while the debate is hot. So essentially, the supercommittee is the tax hike."

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, meanwhile, is mocking "Republican leaders in the Senate saying there will be no revenue." According to Reid, "that's not going to happen" because "this joint committee" will agree to politically "painful" tax increases.

Countering Reid, House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan in an interview with Fox News' Sean Hannity on Monday night promised that Republicans are "not going to put the kind of people on this committee that will go for a tax increase" and "it couldn't pass the House even if they tried."

Ryan also argued that the baseline the supercommittee will be using "makes it impossible to raise taxes."

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But with the wrong people involved, anything is possible. If heavyweight Ryan, for example, the GOP's star on spending reform, doesn't have a big role on the supercommittee, it will be a bad sign.

Encouragingly, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who will appoint half of the panel's GOP contingent, promised Fox News' Neil Cavuto that "the chances of any kind of tax increase passing" with the appointees House Speaker "John Boehner and I are going to put in there are pretty low."

But the Weekly Standard, citing Republican Senate sources, reports that fiscal conservatives might be "barred" from the supercommittee. That's especially disturbing considering that House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi is sure to name tax-raising, class-warrior House Democrats to the panel.

A supercommittee demands superior political leaders, such as Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., Senate Budget Committee ranking Republican Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., and Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C. These are the kind of no-nonsense people in Congress who know the country has a serious spending problem.

They know that the last thing an economy with 9.2% unemployment needs right now is tax hikes on the people who invest and employ

workers.

Vigilance must not cease against the forces that have taxed and spent America into near mediocrity, especially from 2009 to early 2011, when they enjoyed uncontested power in Congress and the executive branch.

At the same time, the outlook is now decidedly positive in the immediate wake of the debt agreement.

The left — from New York Times spendaholic columnist Paul Krugman to the frenzied bloggers of the Daily Kos — considers the debt deal to be a full-scale betrayal of the cause of ever-expanding government.

The truth may be, as Cato Institute director of tax policy studies Chris Edwards points out, that "the 'cuts' in the deal are only cuts from the CBO 'baseline,' which is a Washington construct of ever-rising spending," with "no program or agency terminations" and "none of the vast armada of federal subsidies" scrapped.

But the tax increases the president repeatedly insisted on were also successfully resisted (so far).

The GOP's anti-tax/spend commitment is intact going into the 2012 elections — elections in which the Democrats' reckless attempt to spend the U.S. economy into good health will be a salient issue.

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